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The Kentucky Warbler

Volume IV.

Bowling Green, Ky., April, 1928

Number 2

Our Spring Meeting—More and more our spring meeting is drawing crowds of people interested in birds and wild life. We have this year one of our very best programs. The exact place has not yet been determined, but it will probably be in the Watterson Hotel, where our spring meetings have been held for the last two years. Remember the time is 2:00 p. m., Friday, April 20. Look for the place in the K. E. A. journal and program. Here is the program:

1. Let Us Teach Nature Study—Miss Mary May Wyman, Head of Science Department, Louisville Normal School.
2. A short bird program by the pupils of J. Stoddard Johnston School, Miss Henrietta Hoehle, principal.
3. Bird Boxes—Miss Susie E. Brooke, of Louisville Schools.
4. Address on Bird Life in Kentucky by Dr. W. D. Funkhouser, Dean of the Graduate School, University of Kentucky, Lexington.
4. Discussion of the Fall Meeting.

Field Trip at 6:00 a. m., Saturday, April 21, to be arranged at the meeting.

* * * *

Some Belated Censuses—Two excellent censuses came in the very day our January issue went to press. We were sorry not to have them then, but we are glad to pass them on now.

Lexington—Dec. 26; 2:30 to 5:00 p. m. Weather clear; temperature 27; wind N. W. Walk in Fayette County. Crow, 8; Bronzed Grackle, 72; Sparrow Hawk, 2; Cardinal, 10; Horned Lark (Prairie), 57; Southern Downy Woodpecker, 1; Carolina Chickadee, 1; Killdeer, 4; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Mockingbird, 1. Total, 10 species, 157 individuals. On December 27 I saw 700 to 900 Bronzed Grackles, 800 to 1000 Crows, and 12 Starlings. Three years ago the first Starling appeared in Fayette County. It was shot and brought to Dr. W. D. Funkhouser, of the University of Kentucky, for identification.

—C. K. Morrell.

* * * *

Columbus, Ohio—January 14; 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. Weather mild and clear; wind strong. Along Scioto River, in Greenlawn Cemetery, and in the surrounding Country. Bobwhite, 12; Cardinal, 8; Carolina Chickadee, 4; Brown Creeper, 6; Canvasback Duck, 7; Mourning Dove, 2; Flicker, 2; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 2; Sharpshinned

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Hawk, 1; Marsh Hawk, 1; Blue Jay, 5; Slate-colored Junco, 10; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 6; Meadowlark, 2; Barn Owl, 1; Robin, 3; Starling 155; Song Sparrow, 5; Tree Sparrow, 20; Tufted Titmouse, 2; Towhee, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 4. Total, 23 species, 260 individuals.

—L. Y. Lancaster, Mrs. L. Y. Lancaster and Frank Seaman.

* * * *

Miss Yunker's Article—"Civic Opinion" for December 3, 1927, carried an article by Miss Emilie Yunker entitled "A Visit to Reelfoot Lake." Our members will recall that Miss Yunker and Mrs. Charles McBride visited Reelfoot Lake while we were down at Murray at our fall K. O. S. meeting. A single paragraph will give you some notion of the article as a whole:

"Dr. J. W. Carr, dean of the Murray Normal School, took a party of twenty-two people to Reelfoot Lake, one of the nation's playgrounds, in northern Tennessee. To see Reelfoot Lake in its primitive state with thousands of wild ducks: Mallards, Pintails, Black Ducks, and Coots, together with Canada Geese flying past the sun as it rose, was a sight I shall never forget. There were also thousands of Red-winged Blackbirds, pausing in their flight to feed and rest before resuming their journey to their winter home. In the forests we saw Bluebirds, Warblers, Blue Jays, Goldfinches, Bronzed Grackles, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and Cardinals. At night we heard the weird notes of the Barred Owl. We became quite enthusiastic when we saw two muskrats and a young raccoon."

* * * *

What Barn Owls Eat—There have been numerous and exhaustive studies of the food of Barn Owls, but, so far as I know, no one in our organization has ever studied this subject. The food of Owls is easily determined, without destroying the bird, on account of their peculiar ability to regurgitate indigestible parts of the food that has been eaten. This material is formed into oblong masses, called pellets, and those of the Barn Owl are about two inches in size.

Thirty-six of these pellets were gathered, at various times, from the ground under the pine tree in which the bird spent the day. When they were examined, they were found to be composed of the bones and hair of small rodents and of two insectivora. The upper part of the skulls were intact, and from these the teeth indicated the species. There was an average of three skulls to each pellet, and since it has been determined that about three pellets are thrown out in a day, the number eaten in a given time may be estimated.

Eighty-eight of these skulls were of one species, the field mouse. The other twenty were divided between two other species of mice and the long-tailed and the short-tailed shrews. There was no evidence that any bird had been eaten, which was in keeping with previous studies.

This valuable bird is becoming rare in Kentucky, because it is gentle and unsuspecting, which makes it easily destroyed by people that do not recognize their friends when they see them. If more people knew the truth about the Owls and about this one in particular, fewer would be killed.

—L. Y. Lancaster, Columbus, Ohio.

(We have already mentioned this year that Professor Lancaster is in Ohio State University, finishing his A. M. degree.)

* * * *

Our President, Professor Gordon Wilson, was the guest of the Louisville Outdoor Art League at its annual meeting on March 2.

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In the morning he spoke at the Louisville Normal School, at J. Stoddard Johnston School, and at Abraham Lincoln School. At the annual luncheon he gave his address called "The Faith of an Ornithologist". In the afternoon he addressed a miscellaneous group of nature clubs and bird-lovers at the Male High School. During the day he spoke to more than 1600 people and reports it as the best day of his life. The enthusiasm and interest shown by the people of Louisville in outdoor life are highly commendable.

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Our Fall Meeting—Plans are being made for our fall meeting. Several of the officers recently talked the matter over and favored the Lincoln Farm at Hogenville as our place of meeting. It is a fine place for bird life, aside from its historical importance. Come to the spring meeting prepared to vote as to the location of the fall sessions. Meanwhile the officers will determine local arrangements and be ready to report.

* * * *

Flower Show—Many of our members have been interested in the Ninth National Flower and Garden Show, which was held in Louisville, March 10-18. Several of our members had prominent parts in making the show one of the greatest events ever held in our state.

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Kentucky Academy of Science—The annual meeting of the Kentucky Academy of Science will be held on Saturday, May 12, in the Physics Building, University of Kentucky, Lexington. This organization is made up of the foremost scientists of the state and is highly regarded by scientific men all over America.

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Johnston School—Some special notice should be given the pupils of the J. Stoddard Johnston School of Louisville. The members of our society may have forgotten that 60 of the children of this school are members of The Kentucky Ornithological Society and by their fees make possible the publication of this little leaflet. The editor has visited many schools, but never has he visited one so full of love of nature as this excellent ward school. Officially and personally he wants to recognize the fine nature enthusiasm fostered by this school and its excellent faculty.

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Waves of Migration—Usually in nature things go by waves rather than steadily. This is certainly true of bird migrations. When the first warm days of spring come, there is a sudden influx of birds of species that spent the winter here in small or medium numbers. Some day, without warning, there will appear hundreds of Robins or Bronzed Grackles where there were only a few the day before. It is commonly several weeks before the next wave comes, this time of the birds that are coming from the far South. This wave of the early migrants takes place about the middle of March. During that time a very large part of our summer residents come, especially those that nest earliest. The greatest wave of all comes toward the latter part of April and so far surpasses the other two that it is always spoken of as the wave of migrating birds. By May 1 there is likely to be the most favorable time for seeing the greatest number of birds for the

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season. On or around May 1 I have made all my largest finds, running as high in 1923 as 97 in a single day. Many of the species that spent the winter are still here in numbers, sometimes greatly augmented by fresh arrivals from the South. Then nearly all the summer residents are here, together with many of their kind that will move on to the north to nest. It is impossible to estimate the numbers of the true migrants, those that are here only for a few days, birds that may nest as far north as the northmost limits of Canada. Were one endowed with supernatural or even super ordinary ability, he might easily find in one day 125 species, or even more, especially if he went rapidly from exceptional place to exceptional place. After the first few days of May we begin to feel that the great crest is past and that we shall see only a small imitation of this wave about the middle of October and no real rival of it again until April and May.

* * * *

Before Sunrise—For many years I have had a habit of taking early morning walks to study birds. In spite of exceptional finds in broad-open daylight, nothing can give quite the thrill of hearing the waking hosts of birds before the first rays of the sun appear. This is a story that never grows old; though it is repeated every morning for weeks every spring, it is perennially new and fresh, suggestive of the songs of the morning stars in chorus. Chaucer mentions the birds as sleeping all the night in springtime with open eye, and what he says seems to be literally true. Some of the species sing all night. At one time in my bird study I wrote an article on "Birds That Sing At Night," and as I now remember it, I listed some fifteen kinds that are common here. It is, however, not these distinctly night songsters that I am now referring to but to those that wake up early like woman of the Proverbs, "While it is yet night." Many a time I have been up at 2:30 in the morning, but not often have I been up too early to hear some birds singing. Martins had waked and were scouring the air for the early insects, like the proverbial bird that has been used so often to quicken our movements and arouse us from our slumbers. Kill-deers seem to be awake about as early as any, and at this season are unusually merry. The Mockingbird, singing all the night in a quiet way, starts his daring day song as soon as there are even prophecies of light. Long before sunrise I have found dozens of species. My record has been 64 species identified by voice or color before sunrise. For many years I made it a habit to take down the exact minute at which each species began to sing. It is remarkable that dozens of lists vary very little in the order of the birds, though there is considerable variation in the time on account of the weather.

THE KENTUCKY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April, 1923

President ----- Professor Gordon Wilson, Bowling Green
Vice-President ----- Miss Emilie Yunker, Louisville
Secretary-Treasurer -- Mrs. Charles McBride, 1106 S. Fourth St.,
Louisville

Meets annually in the spring at Louisville, during the week of The Kentucky Educational Association; in the fall at some Kentucky college.

Dues for K. O. S. membership: local or state members, 50c annually; affiliate, \$2.00.

Address Warbler correspondence to the President.